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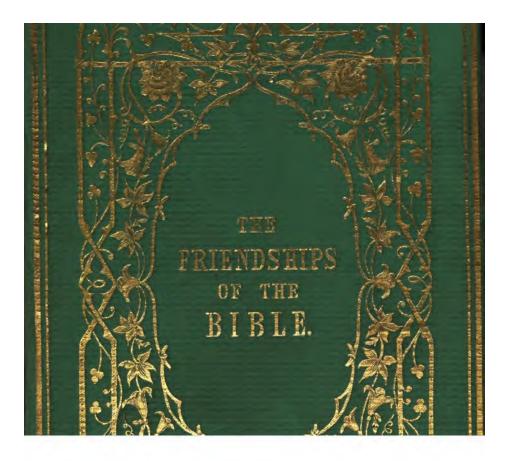
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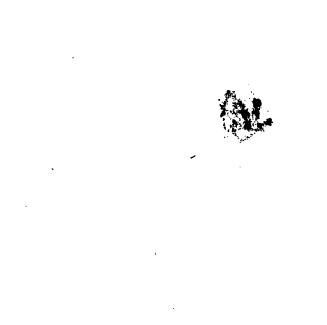




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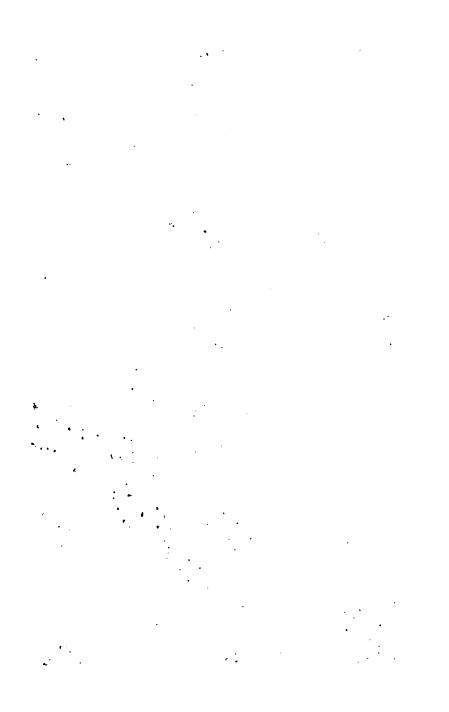


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triendships:

BABLL





THE

FRIENDSHIPS OF THE BIBLE.

BY AMICUS.

Embellished with Engrabings.

"Instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."—2 Timothy, iii. 16, 17.

LONDON:

PARTRIDGE, OAKEY & Co., PATERNOSTER ROW;
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Introduction.

HO is there in the civilized world insensible to the charms of friendship? Who does not seek after and try to retain it? Who is there but considers himself the friend of some one or other? Who is there that can lose a

friend without regret? Yet, nevertheless,

much that is called and thought to be friendship is very unlike it. Cowper says—

"No knave but boldly will pretend
The requisites that form a friend,
A real and a sound one;
Nor any fool he would deceive
But prove as ready to believe,
And dream that he had found one."

But whatever may be the quality of worldly friendships, there can be no doubt that *Christian* people should base and cherish theirs upon Christian principles.

All agree that the formation of friendships amongst the young is of the greatest importance. How often has the whole stream of a man's life been poisoned by the contaminating influence of unworthy associates, selected in the days of his youth. How many dying sinners have traced their infidelity to hearing the heretical opinions and pernicious counsels of those to whom they had unhappily attached themselves in

the morning of life—others again, their moral corruption, to the temptations and persuasions of fascinating companions, whose allurements they found it hard to resist—whilst some have even been drawn into the commission of the most awful crimes by the baneful example and advice of those who professed to be their friends.

All these facts are commonly known, but with true, enduring, disinterested, faithful friendship we are not so familiar. It is intended in this volume to examine the real nature of friendship upon Scripture grounds, and to illustrate the subject by Bible examples.

We do not suppose that friendship can only exist between two equals, whose tastes and sympathies flow in one direction, and into whose peculiar enjoyments no third person is ever admitted—not so—this is one high and exquisite phase of friendship—but the term *friendship* is comprehensive

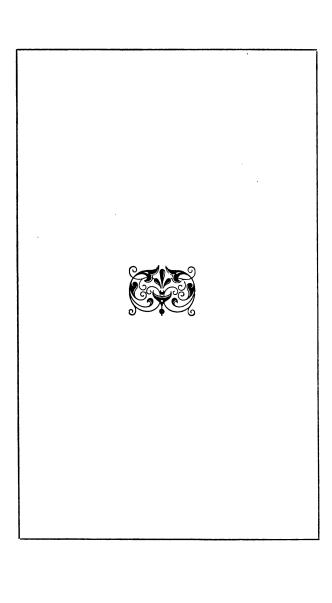
and its application extensive. There is the friendship of the husband for the wife, the wife for the husband; the master for the servant, the servant for the master; the superior for the inferior, the inferior for the superior, &c. &c.

To the consideration, then, of how the mutual responsibilities of friendship have been, can, and should be acted out in the different connexions of the great human family, the following chapters will be devoted, under the conviction that the only true criterion of the merits and duties of friendship is, the Bible.



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CHAPTER I.

"DAVID AND JONATHAN."

"A friend loveth at all times."

HE beautiful
history of
Jonathan
and David
has been
an oft-told tale,
and yet, if closely studied, there
may be found
delicate workings and bright
gleams of excellence shining

through the narrative, not always observed, and which if reflected on some characters would greatly improve them.

At the first meeting of these two young men, their positions were widely different. Jonathan was the son of a king; David, the keeper of his father's sheep. We can have no hesitation in affirming that Jonathan was a pious prince, and he must have been struck by the simplicity as well as the strength of David's faith and devotion, when he saw him approach the giant with no other weapon than the missive of a rustic. David, it appears, possessed external attractions, and in the opening of the account given of this friendship, we learn, that "the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and he loved him as his own soul." The next thing which follows is the description of how Jonathan delighted to prove his affection by bestowing upon David the most pleasing gifts, such as bespoke the intimate

regard of a brother. "And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments even to his sword, and his bow, and his girdle."

Now it is frequently the case that two people begin a friendship in the same manner as this, but do we often find that such disinterested faithfulness as Jonathan's lasts to the end? The sudden emotions which might fill the heart, and call forth deep affection from any person towards a certain object of attraction, would naturally produce the desire of pleasing and benefiting that object in every possible way; and so far it would be well, if such a fresh spring of delight eventually subsided into a settled attachment of a more sober kind. But suppose a man unconsciously winning the regard of another, be pursued by personal attentions, and loaded with unsought favours, then, after a while (the fever of feeling having passed away, and the charm of novelty fled), find himself slighted, and exposed to the coolness of his once warm friend—what can he think? Why, only, that the voluntary advances of such an one sprung from mere selfish caprice, and that his profession of friendship must be regarded rather as an insult than a kindness.

In the first book of Samuel and nine-teenth chapter, we find Saul worked up by the spirit of envy and jealousy, commanding Jonathan and his servants to slay David. Here, as on similar occasions, Jonathan exhibits the wisdom of a true friend, as well as the respect due to a father from his son. He first apprizes David of his danger, and then presents himself in the admirable character of a peace-maker. At such a moment as this, when one so unoffending, and so dear to him, was unjustly threatened and persecuted, it would have been natural to expect that the language of reproof, or at least of indignant remonstrance would have

burst from the lips of the generous prince. But no,—he knew "a more excellent way," and to that way he betook himself,—"And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee and because his words have been to theeward very good. For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the Lord wrought a great salvation for all Israel; thou sawest it and didst rejoice, wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause?"

Even the hard heart of Saul was not proof against this touching appeal. In a few words he had been shewn, at a glance, David's uprightness, valour, and renown, and at the same time was reminded of the iniquity of conspiring against one, who was so evidently favoured of God. The pleader proved successful, and for a season Saul was reconciled

to David. In this transaction it seems that Jonathan subdued all personal feeling or fear of unpleasant results; he was simply governed by a desire to honour God, deliver his friend, and save his father from the commission of sin. Oh! happy attainment, when a man can accomplish a hazardous undertaking, and manage to forget himself throughout the whole of it!

History tells us that the restless spirit of Saul was soon again active in an attempt to destroy his intended victim. David, however, eluded his pursuers by a stratagem of Michal's; and, after having fled to Samuel for succour, contrived to see Jonathan. This interview is one of the most pathetic ever recorded. The tender manner in which Jonathan endeavoured to comfort and assure the heart of his friend in so distressing a situation; his recognition of David's future elevation above himself and his father's family; his perfect submission to the will of





DAVID AND JONATHAN, page 9.

God in setting aside his own claims to the throne; the ingenious plan suggested by love to ascertain and inform David of the extent of his danger; and the solemn covenant made between them, of which God was the only witness—all these invaluable evidences of mind and heart combined, display a refinement of feeling which defies description.

The last meeting of these two friends which Scripture mentions, once more bears testimony to the enduring affection and unfailing constancy of Jonathan. "And David saw that Saul was come out to seek his life; and David was in the wilderness of Ziph in a wood. And Jonathan Saul's son arose and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God. And he said unto him, Fear not, for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my

father knoweth. And the two made a covenant before the Lord, and David abode in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house."—1 Sam. xxiii. 15.

In the experience men have of human friendships, it is not usual to find that a continuance of what is called misfortune, on the one side, contributes to the increase of regard and esteem, or desire to show unwearied kindness on the other. noble instances of disinterested friendship are rare—but, when found, most worthy of imitation. The duty, as well as privilege, of helping and sustaining a falling friend, becomes doubly imperative when that friend is suffering for righteousness' sake; and where the case is thus, even natural affection should not stand in the way to oppose the exercise of so laudable a virtue. We can perceive from all that is written concerning Jonathan in Scripture, that he was a good son; but this in no way interfered with

his faithful dealings towards his friend. We find him, disgusted as he must have been with the envy, jealousy, ingratitude, injustice and cruelty of Saul's conduct, in his place; as a subject fighting the king's battles; as a son taking part against the enemies of his father, although he well knew that the kingdom would be taken from him and given to David. And finally we see, that he perished in the path of duty, at his father's side. He neglected not to perform those services for his king and country which his station demanded of him, yet preserved to the last, in succouring, comforting, advising, and encouraging David, whom he loved, be it remembered, in the spirit as well as in the flesh.

Had he been spared, days followed which would have given "the man after God's own heart" ample opportunity of conferring upon his friend and former benefactor every blessing in his power; but there was something better in store for that magnanimous prince. "How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women. How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!"

So sung and lamented the sweet Psalmist of Israel, and surely we may say, was "there not a cause?"





CHAPTER II.

ABIGAIL.

"She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness."

Another striking incident in the life of David brings before us a new picture of friendship in a different relationship. In the 1st of Samuel, 25th chapter, we read, "And David arose and went down to the wilderness of Paran, and there was a man in Maon, whose possessions were in Carmel; and the man was very great, and he had three thousand sheep, and a thousand goats: and he was shearing his sheep in Carmel. Now the name of the man was Nabal, and the name of his wife Abigail; and she was a woman of good understanding and of a

beautiful countenance; but the man was churlish and evil in his doings; and he was of the house of Caleb. And David heard in the wilderness that Nabal did shear his sheep. And David sent out ten young men, and said unto the young men, Get you up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name, and thus shall ye say to him that liveth in prosperity, Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast. And now I have heard that thou hast shearers: now thy shepherds which were with us, we hurt them not, neither was there aught missing unto them all the while they were in Carmel. Ask thy young men and they will shew thee. Wherefore, let the young men find favour in thine eyes; for we come in a good day: give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants, and to thy son David. And when David's young men came, they spake to Nabal according to all those words in the name of David and ceased. And Nabal answered David's servants and said. Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? there be many servants now-a-days that break away every man from his master. Shall I then take my bread, and water, and flesh, that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men whom I know not whence they be? David's young men turned their way and went again, and came and told him all those sayings, and David said unto his men, "Gird ye on every man his sword, and David also girded on his sword; and there went up after David about four hundred men: and two hundred abode by the stuff."

David's wrath was kindled, and the mighty man of war arose in his anger to punish this insolence.

"But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, Behold David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute

our master: and he railed on them. the men were very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we anything, as long as we were conversant with them, when we were in the fields. They were a wall unto us both by night and day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep. Now, therefore, know and consider what thou wilt do; for evil is determined against our master, and against all his household: for he is such a son of Belial that a man cannot speak to him." Here is manifested the fidelity of a good servant, as well as the confidence her people felt in the wisdom and prudence of Abigail. The advice was salutary and to the point-"Consider what thou wilt do;" for their position was truly critical, and required both sagacity to think and courage to act in what was necessary to be done for their protection. The counsel was heeded, and the faithful wife having decided on the line of duty, proceeded to

perform it. "Then Abigail made haste and took two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched corn, and an hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on asses. she said unto her servants, Go on before me, behold, I come after you. But she told not her husband Nabal. And it was so as she rode on the ass, that she came down by the covert of the hill, and behold David and his men came down against her; and she met Now David had said, Surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that pertained unto him: and he hath requited me evil for good. So and more also do God unto the enemies of David, if I leave any of all that pertain to him by the morning light."

It must have been a trying moment for Abigail, a woman, coming in her native weakness to meet such a warrior as David,

and that warrior approaching her on such an errand; but she was not to be moved from her purpose. "And when Abigail saw David, she hasted and lighted off the ass and fell down before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground and fell at his feet, and said, Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be; and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience. and hear the words of thine handmaid. Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, even Nabal: for Nabal is his name, and folly is with him; but I, thine handmaid, saw not the young men of my lord whom thou didst send. Now, therefore, my lord, as the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, seeing the Lord hath withholden thee from coming to shed blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand, now let thine enemies and they that seek evil to my lord be as Nabal. And now this blessing which thine handmaid hath brought unto my lord,



DAVID AND ABIGAIL, page 18.

let it be even given unto the young men that follow my lord. I pray thee forgive the trespass of thy handmaid; for the Lord will certainly make my lord a sure house; because my lord fighteth the battles of the Lord, and evil hath not been found in thee all thy days. Yet a man is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul; but the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God; and the souls of thine enemies, them shall He sling out, as out of the middle of a sling. And it shall come to pass when the Lord shall have done to my lord according to all the good that He hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel, that this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself; but when the Lord shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid."

The novelty of the situation into which circumstances had suddenly driven her, may partly account for the eloquence of Abigail upon this remarkable occasion. She was forced, by the exigencies of the case, to assume the character of protector to her husband and his household; for we have no reason to suppose that her general conduct and disposition were unfeminine or bold. There was a mixture of simplicity and tact in her address which is very observable. She brought forward in her defence, nothing more than a few plain truths, and yet they were so aptly expressed, and with so much earnest entreaty, that no composition however studied could have been better calculated to effect the object she had in view. In this extremity she shewed herself a friend to her husband, for even the evil of his character, which she could not conceal, she admitted in such a way as to disarm David of his anger, and lead him to treat Nabal's unwarrantable conduct with contempt, rather than inflict on him the chastisement he so richly de-This done, she avoided any further notice of him, and adroitly hastened to declare her ignorance of the arrival of David's messengers; then, as if laying the blame on herself, she thus excused her household, and desired that she alone might bear the weight of his just displeasure. the same time proffering the required food which she had willingly brought for his acceptance. She also had recourse to an argument which was sure to tell upon a gracious heart. She reminded David of his standing before God, and urged the desirableness of his refraining from shedding blood which might well be spared; as in time to come he would never regret having stayed his hand from unnecessary slaughter, or not having revenged himself on an unworthy enemy. With prophetic voice

she further assured him, that nothing could prevent the purposes of mercy which God had towards him and his house; so that whatever might be the aspect of his opposers, no adversary could possibly prevail against him; and this she positively predicted by making elegant allusion to his conquest over Goliath by means of a sling and a stone. Now, in all this she proved herself friendly to David, and the sequel soon shewed, "how forcible are right words."

"And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel which sent thee this day to meet me; and blessed be thy advice; and blessed be thou which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with my own hand. For in very deed, as the Lord God of Israel liveth, except thou hadst hasted and come to meet me, surely there had not been left any unto Nabal by the morning light. So David received of her hand that which she

had brought, and said unto her, Go up in peace unto thine house: see I have heark-ened unto thy voice, and have accepted thy person."

How happy, and how grateful, must have been the feelings of Abigail as she returned to the home, the husband, and the household, which she had been the instrument of saving from destruction! It may be said, that in the part she took she was influenced by selfinterest, as her own safety was included in that of the rest. This at first sight seems true, but yet, on reflection we may perceive that had self-preservation been her sole or principal desire, she could easily have secured it by very different means. For had she appeared before David as an innocent, suffering, helpless female, imploring his mercy, and throwing herself upon his compassion, it is not difficult to imagine, that her personal beauty might have moved David's affectionate heart, and won the protection she sought for herself, although her followers had all been utterly destroyed. An interesting tale of her distress would have worked upon his feelings, and excited that tenderness and sympathy which spontaneously rise in the bosom of a noble-minded man, whenever the weaker sex are troubled or oppressed. But Abigail's deportment throughout affords a valuable study for wives and women in authority. There must be a crucifixion of self to produce anything really great and good in social life. When this estimable woman set out in the character of mediatrix, humanly speaking, she had everything to fear; but her resolute aim was to accomplish good in a right spirit, and she was rewarded with success. She, unlike us, was of course ignorant of the future part of her history. It was impossible for her to foresee that in a short time the miserable Nabal to whom she was bringing the news of deliverance would be smitten by the hand of God; and afterwards she would become united to another, a righteous and a royal partner; and one who was able to understand and appreciate, herself, her virtues, her talents, and affections.





CHAPTER III.

ABRAHAM AND ELIEZER.

"Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

THE simple habits of patriarchal times possess a charm which readily winds itself round the heart of a feeling reader, and adds to the enjoyment of pursuing the thread of sacred truth. Abraham has been divinely named "the friend of God," and therefore, as might be expected, was also the friend both of his kindred and dependants. For in proportion as real spirituality reigns in the character of a man, he will care for and strive to promote the best interests of those who surround him.

It was after the death of Sarah, "When

Abraham was old and well-strickenin years," that he felt the time was come for his promised son Isaac to marry. So, summoning "his steward, the eldest servant of his house, and ruler over all that he had. Eliezer of Damascus," he informed him of the important mission with which he was about to be charged, saying, "Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and I will make thee sware by the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, amongst whom I dwell. But thou shalt go into my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac." Nothing could be more suitable in commencing a business of such immense consequence to his posterity, than insisting upon the solemn oath which Abraham demanded of his servant in the opening words of this conference. It implied no doubt of Eliezer's readiness to undertake the work, nor of his fidelity in

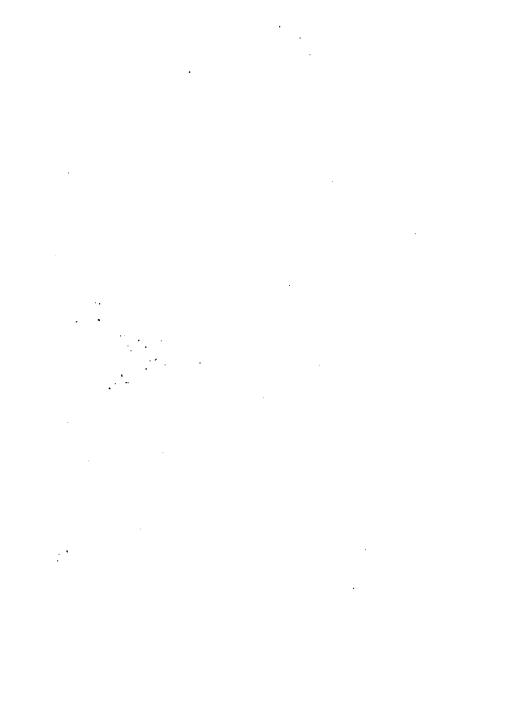
performing the wishes and commands of his master; but as a religious seal to a solemn compact, made under peculiar circumstances, it served as an appeal to God to bind the messenger to his purpose, and bless him in an enterprize, which, if conducted without divine assistance and direction, would be fraught with the most serious results to the Hebrew nation. "And the servant said unto him. Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me into this land: must I needs bring thy son again into the land from whence thou camest? And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou, that thou bring not my son thither again," &c. &c.

Prepared with this determination, Eliezer set out on his journey to Mesopotamia, and at length reached the city of Nahor. There he halted, and "led his camels to a well without the city." It was evening, the time when, according to the customs of these people, the women came forth to draw water.

Eliezer having proceeded thus far in his task, began to feel the need of Supreme guidance as to the next step he should take. With commendable faith in the power and mercy of the most high God, he laid before Him his request, calling upon the "God of his master Abraham," to order the events of His providence in such a manner, as to make it perfectly clear which was the maiden appointed to be the future partner of the cherished Isaac. His mode of address to the Lord, was singularly simple and pathetic. His heart was in the work. He was pleading for his earthly master—for Abraham's dearest interests in this life. And he said, "O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee send me good speed this day and shew kindness unto my master Abraham." How well would it be if all servants, like Eliezer, when conducting affairs in the service of a master, made the interests of that master their own for the time being.

A praying servant is a treasure. It matters not what station he holds, nor to what grade he belongs, in that large portion of society; from the prime minister in his place of state, down to the groom in the stable, he who really prays for his master, serves him in a praying spirit, and brings untold blessings both upon him and his progeny. was much tenderness in the expression Eliezer used; "shew kindness unto my master Abraham." As if he would remind the Most High, that it was a time of great anxiety for the patriarch, when the gentlest feelings of his nature were being exercised, and he waiting in uncertainty as to the success of the somewhat difficult expedition upon which he had dispatched his servant. It was an earnest, simple prayer, and made in behalf of another. We see how God regards such prayers—for, "it came to pass before he had done speaking that, behold, Rebekah came out"-"with her pitcher

ELIEZER AND REBEKAH, page 30.



upon her shoulder"-and the petition of Eliezer was answered precisely as he desired it should be. According to the conditions of the prayer, the damsel acceeded to his request to give him water, and then offered, unsolicited, to draw for the camels also; it is written, "and the man wondering at her held his peace." It ought not to surprise us when we receive an immediate answer to our. supplications at the throne of gracebut such is the weakness of our faith, and the blindness of our nature, that we often fail to recognise the very thing we have implored and obtained at the hand of the Lord, even though it be granted in the exact form we requested. He had said, "shew me good speed"—and it was done. As the tale continues, Eliezer inquired of Rebekah concerning her kindred, and after giving him the necessary information she then invited him to her father's house. Eliezer was now thoroughly conscious of being divinely led to this damsel, and did not forget (what, alas! is too often forgotten in moments of success,) at once to offer praise to God, for having so signally prospered those efforts made to bring about the accomplishment of Abraham's desire, according to the purpose and promise of Jehovah.

The reception of Eliezer into the house of Bethuel immediately followed, where accommodation was provided for himself, his camels, and attendants. "And they set meat before him to eat: but he said, I will not eat until I have told my errand." Tired and jaded as he probably was after travelling in a hot climate, he refused refreshment and repose, for in the spirit of Christ, who once said when pressed to eat, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of"—this faithful servant would take no food till he had declared the behest and dealings of God concerning the commission which Abraham

had given him. The open, straightforward method employed in detailing what had passed, marked the genuine character of Eliezer's religion, for he was neither ashamed to own how entirely he threw himself upon the providence of God, nor how implicitly he relied upon the same power and goodness to procure what he sought and expected to find. After having told his little history up to that moment, he continued, saying, "Now, if ye will deal truly and kindly with my master, tell me: and if not, tell me: that I may turn to the right hand or to the left. Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, The thing proceedeth from the Lord; we cannot speak unto thee good or bad. hold Rebekah is before thee; take her and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife as the Lord hath spoken. And it came to pass, that when Abraham's servant heard their words, he worshipped the Lord, bowing himself to the earth."

"The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul," and it is a good thing when the experience of that sweetness draws forth the language of praise and thanksgiving to Him "who delighteth in mercy"—" hath respect unto the lowly"—and "doeth wonders."

The treaty being settled, Eliezer and his company partook of the hospitality of Bethuel. Then came the last, though not least notable proof we have of the friendship of this worthy domestic for his master. When Rebekah's father and family heard that her immediate departure was intended, they very naturally desired that the guests should extend their visit, and allow her to remain with her parents some time longer. But the decision of Eliezer's reply, tempered as it was with wise and pious remonstrance, was sufficient to gain his wish by the acquiescence of the whole party.

And he said unto them, Hinder me not, seeing the Lord hath prospered my way;

send me away that I may go unto my master."

He had risen in the morning knowing that Abraham was awaiting the issue of their plan in a state of suspense—and he was intent upon relieving that suspense by delivering up the charge which God in His providence had so graciously committed to his care—consequently he urged the request to be gone, and was soon on his way, joyfully bearing along in triumph the well-earned fruit of his prayerful and self-denying labours. The three leading features of Eliezer's character and conduct touching his connexion with Abraham appear to be these-Affection, Fidelity, and Diligence. Probably in his case the strength of the first increased the activity of the other two. loved his master, or he would not have shewn so much thought as he did throughout for the feelings of the Patriarch. observe that he intreated for "kindness" to

his master, both when approaching God and addressing Bethuel. It has been said. "love makes labour light," and truly it is so, for though principle will make a servant faithful and industrious in obeying the orders of his master, yet love in addition will give a warmth and interest in the performance of those duties, which, without it, however correctly done, would be comparatively cold and spiritless in their execution. In drawing after him a servant's heart, much must of course depend upon the carriage of the master to his servant; the absence of reciprocal friendship too often confines their acquaintance to a mere matter of convenience. But he is wise who can appreciate what is kindly meant by him who rules; and is not too proud to love the man to whose authority nevertheless he bows, and whose superiority he admits and respects. Such was Eliezer—and such may all Christian servants be!



CHAPTER IV.

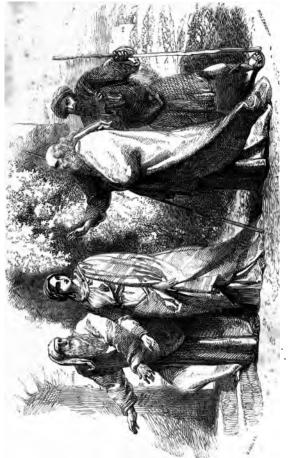
ELISHA AND THE SHUNAMITE.

"He that receiveth you, receiveth me."

No person of a reflective cast could pass over the various Druidical remains existing in parts of our beautiful island, without receiving a significant lesson. The Christian poet says,

> "How fleet is a glance of the mind; Compared with the speed of its flight, The tempest itself lags behind, And the swift winged arrows of light."

Huge and curiously arranged stones—some bare and exposed to view in a bold and barren landscape, others in more luxuriant situations overgrown with oak saplings, plants, or mosses on richly wooded hills-bring before the eye of imagination a time and scene when barbarous priests of an uncivilised age performed their superstitions upon those very stones. Yes, man is naturally an idolator; he must worship something; and he who denies worshipping anything, is unconscious of having constituted himself the object of his The Brahmin of the Hindoo, the adoration. Prophet of the Mormon, the Apostle of the Irvingite, and the Romish Priest, all yield ample demonstration of the tendency of human nature to submit to the thraldom of But notwithstanding the priestly power. evils of priestcraft, no Bible student can be ignorant of its being God's will that the preachers and teachers of His truth should be specially honoured by the followers of Christ, on account of their divine mission, They are to be esteemed "very highly in love for their work's sake,"—as spiritual



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BLISHA AND THE SHUNAMITE, page 39.

superiors; and they are to be considered in temporal matters also, because those who "cannot leave the word of God to serve tables," but feel it necessary to "give themselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the word," have not much opportunity of looking after "the meat which perisheth," either for themselves or their families. Every Christian then will respect the ministers of God's truth; and, according to his power, feel himself privileged in aiding them by sublunary service. There are certain fixed principles in true religion which must always remain the same, and therefore it is we find, that, in all essential points, the character of saints has been alike from the beginning of time to the present hour. was in passing to Shunem that Elisha the prophet of God was constrained, by a female of consequence, to partake of her hospitality. "And so it was, that, as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither."

Shunamite set a proper value upon Elisha's visits, for "she said unto her husband, behold now I perceive this is an holy man of God which passeth by us continually. Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set before him there a bed, and a table and a stool and a candlestick; and it shall be when he cometh to us, he shall turn in hither."—The veneration she entertained for Elisha's spirituality was accompanied by that friendly consideration for his bodily wants, requisite indeed for the earthen vessel, although it contained a There was nothing exdivine treasure. travagant either in her idea, or the realisation of it; for in honouring the prophet she honoured Him who sent him; and by consulting his personal comfort she did, what all believers should do, practically prove they hold their substance, as given to be used for the glory of God, and the good of men. The reverence felt for the sacred character of their guest was quite unlike the superstitious servility which most teachers of false religions demand, or extort, from their followers. Neither did it betray any sign of an intemperate idolising admiration, by the indulgence of which well-intentioned people sometimes annoy and injure their ministers, harm themselves, and bring discredit upon the cause of Christ. The action of the Shunamite was friendly and rational; the spirit which prompted it fervent and affectionate. Like Gaius, the liberal host of Paul, so warmly mentioned by the loving John, she left behind for the churches use, an example of friendly hospitality to the minister of God, which all members in every section should copy, as far as they have the means and opportunity.

It has been said by wise and pious lips, "God is no man's debtor,"—and the experience of the saints in every age will respond to that truth. Elisha was not un-

mindful of the friendship the Shunamite had shewn for him. She never could have anticipated that the gift of a son would be granted in remembrance of her kindness to the prophet. But her conduct being disinterested was acceptable to the God of the prophet, and in embracing her child she learned the faithfulness of the inspired word, "them that honour me I will honour." Nor did the favour of God towards her through Elishaend For this only son when grown died, and was miraculously raised to life in answer to the prayer of the prophet. Then, again, a time of famine came of seven years, and the man of God desired her "to begone with her household and sojourn where she could." Obedient to the voice of warning she went to the land of the Philistines, and at the expiration of the term specified returned to her native place—and "went forth to cry to the king, for her house and for her land. And the king talked with Gehazi, the servant of the man of God, saying, Tell me, I pray thee, all the great things that Elisha hath done. And it came to pass as he was telling the king how he had restored a dead body to life, that, behold, the woman whose son he had restored to life cried to the king for her house and for her land. And Gehazi said, My lord, O king, this is the woman, and this is her son whom Elisha restored to life. And when the king asked the woman she told him. So the king appointed unto her a certain officer, saying, Restore all that was hers, and all the fruits of the field since the day that she left the land, even until now." The working of divine Providence is always interesting and wonderful, whether perceived or not; but at times we are permitted to see the ordering of His dealings with the church so marvellously brought about, that we are impelled to cry out with the Psalmist, "What is man, O Lord, that thou takest

knowledge of him, or the son of man that thou makest account of him!" Yet "such honour have all His saints." From the history of the Shunamite may be gathered, that God is pleased to approve of friendship shewn for the ministers of His word. Not slavish submission, not cold indifference, not presumptuous patronage, but friendship; combining, as it should, respect for the ambassador of Christ, with thoughtful kindness for the feelings and person of the man who fills that highly responsible office. should be remembered how much faithful and laborious ministers of the Gospel have to contend with and endure. They have many troubles and temptations peculiar to their position; the weight and extent of which none but themselves can fully under-Surely then ministers may claim stand. the friendship of the churches, to whose members the "great woman" of Shunem has left an admirable precedent, which should

not be lost upon them. From her might be taken a hint (when wanted), of what friend-ship for ministers means.





CHAPTER V.

PAUL, JOSEPH, AND RUTH.

"By love serve one another."

For the maintenance and furtherance of his own comfort and convenience it has ever been customary with man, in all ages, commercially to interchange services and civilities with his fellow-creatures. But conduct springing from motives merely selfish, must be valued at its right worth. The ordinary duties of life may be discharged with precision, fairness, and discretion; and yet, the parties concerned in that intercourse, fail to feel or evince anything like friendship between each other. But clearly this is wrong;—for however it might be expected

from natural men, it ought never to be witnessed in the doings of Christians, who should be not only a company of friends amongst themselves; but shew, themselves. friendly to all men at all times. Want of consideration for others, through thinking too much of ourselves, is the obvious reason of such frequent deficiencies in performing the duties of friendship. For practical use, we have continual need to bear in our remembrance the scriptural injunction, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." Those particularly who, in the providence of God, are raised somewhat above their fellows, whether by rank, station, wealth, genius, or physical superiority, should seriously consider that they are accountable for the rare talents of influence and power; talents not given to "be folded up in a napkin," but used largely and widely for the benefit of the brethren, and mankind in general.

The case of inferiors (in whatever sense that term be applied) especially requires the watchful regard of those who are over them. A judicious manager of children will listen to their little sorrows and complaints with grave attention, and then settle their trifles with an air of sympathy and interest which, in the eyes of such young ones, is only befitting matters of the vast importance they believe them to be. Thus in adult life, when dealing with little people, whether of small mind, education, means, attainments, or experience, superiors should think and strive to act for the advantage of the minima, remembering that, in the wise economy of God, it is nothing more than they have a right to expect-"To whomsoever much is given of him shall be much required." in his Epistle to Philemon, exemplifies the character of a Christian friend with great force and beauty. In order to protect and serve Onesimus, he made use of arguments

to gain his end which, if they did not exactly command obedience to his wishes, were almost certain to secure the fulfilment of them. He exerted his influence and exercised his authority as a person of lower attainments would not have been able to do. So again, in the case of Joseph, who, when raised to a state of dignity and splendour, acted with a forethought and wisdom in addition to kindness and liberality which signalized him indeed as a "brother born for adversity." And it is the more surprising and deserving of admiration, when the former cruel and unnatural behaviour of his brethren is borne Natural affection will certainly, in mind. sometimes, produce unpremeditated acts of tenderness and munificence: these, however, are not necessarily marks of right principle But considerate, careful carrying out of good designs for the benefit of others, is the genuine and heavenly offspring of real Christian friendship.

The simple and impressive story of the courageous yet modest Ruth, supplies another though rather different illustration of the subject. The prospects which lay before her in accompanying Naomi were anything but promising according to human perception. It would have been more natural, and perhaps more prudent in a worldly sense, to remain in her own land and mix with those who most probably would soon have found her a new protector and another asylum. But the mind of Ruth appears to have been well-regulated; and there is a tenderness depicted in the deeds reported of her, which inspires the reader no less with respect than affection for her character. The value of her substantial friendship for Naomi consisted in this—it was based on divine principle. She had learned to love the God Naomi loved; and seemed to understand and feel the spirit of the scriptural command, "thine own and thy father's friend forsake

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RUTH AND NAOMI, page 51.

Here, as it must invariably be when another is to be served, self was forgotten. Consideration of future prospects was not the point in hand. The present question was this: Ought Naomi, a disconsolate, childless widow, to wander to the land of Judah almost an alien, and alone? Then the duty being plain, the decision was prompt, and therefore we read, that the fair Ruth was "stedfastly minded to go"—which she feelingly asserted in her exquisite reply to Naomi's repeated dissuasions, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me and more also, if aught but death part thee and me."

Ruth was young and robust, as her labours in the fields of Boaz testify, and grudged not the generous toil which earned the golden grain she wanted for Naomi's nourish-"The Lord looketh on the heart." She voluntarily devoted her youth and strength to the service of the friendless Naomi; and (to speak after the manner of men) it was a great sacrifice—but, He "who seeth not as man seeth" had prepared for her a rich recompense in the love and liberality of Boaz. Had she withholden her compassionate aid from Naomi, we might picture the solitary widow bereft of every earthly tie, mournfully returning to a scene where she would arrive unknown and uncared for, and at a season of life when there is little left to excite interest in the bosoms of strangers. But the industry, purity, and youthful innocence of Ruth were instrumental in opening the way to a bright and happy future both for Naomi and her gentle self. The power of influence, how great it is !—and when well employed how good it is! The penniless Ruth held a rich dowry in the virtues and graces which adorned her lowly mind. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted."





CHAPTER VI.

FORTUITOUS ACTS OF FRIENDSHIP.

"Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."

THE position of a Christian in this world is peculiar. He ought to live as a "pilgrim," not over concerned about mundane affairs, still ever ready to help, serve, and consider all men. He should be no ascetic, yet live above the world; in the world, but not of it. Christian principle is of an expansive nature, reaching far and wide—and, unchecked by adverse circumstances, forces its way through every difficulty, and will be felt or seen whatever attempts be made to resist its force, or conceal its effects. Not unlike

the vegetable creation, which, working under the law of a Divine power, steadily and unfailingly pushes on its course season after season, spreading forth beauties, yielding delicacies, or casting foliage as it goesaccording to the time-yet ever busy, obedient to the voice of Him who said. "Let the earth bring forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself upon the earth, and it was so." We have often gazed upon some flowering shrub covered with innumerable blossoms which successively bloom and fall, to be replaced by others equally beautiful and apparently the same. But though similar, the flowerets were distinct, and each having fulfilled its end by glorifying Him who gave it life, receded gently from the parent bough, and noiseless dropping to the ground, was seen no more. So it is with the graces of a Christian's life. They steal forth like

sweet flowers, one here or there, one now or then, as occasion may require; but not as the perishing petals of the earth shall they pass away to be eternally forgotten. "In that day" the Lord will acknowledge the trees of His own planting, and faithfully remember before all, their bygone freshness, fragrance, and adornment.

An opportunity in life at times occurs which enables the Christian to perform some singular act of friendship for an individual; the casual acquaintance with whose circumstances appears but an ordinary opening for rendering unexpected service in the hour of need. The duty is engaged in, and discharged, without any regard to, or connection with, the past or future. Such was the case when Barzillai the Gileadite came to the help of David, when he fled because of Absalom. "He brought (in company with Shobi and Machir), beds, and basons, and earthen vessels, and wheat, and barley, and

flour, and parched corn, and beans, and lentils, and parched pulse, and honey, and butter, and sheep, and cheese of kine, for David and for the people that were with him, to eat: for they said, The people is hungry, and weary, and thirsty, in the wilderness." That this generous conduct was but the emanation of disinterested friendly feeling is evident from the fact, that when the king returned victorious after the death of his son, and Barzillai came to conduct him over Jordan, the old man declined for himself all the honours proferred by David as marks of thankfulness, and requested to be allowed to go back to his own place in peace, and die. Now the aged Gileadite was "a very great man," but the working of the same principle is quite as true where the instrumentality employed is far more Very humble means have not insignificant. unfrequently produced astonishing results. "Naaman, captain of the host of the king of

Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour; but he was a leper. And the Syrians had gone out in companies, and had brought captive out of the land of Israel a little maid, and she waited on Naaman's wife. And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord was with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy." this young slave was generally treated by her mistress we are not told; but, in her lowly capacity, it was somewhat venturesome, one would think, to offer an opinion in the shape of a positive assertion that her lord could be cured. She was incapable of doing anything for him herself, but freely gave the knowledge her short experience had gained; and that too for the captain of the people who had carried her away captive from her own native land! Her fer-

vent desire was at length accomplished. Through the intervention of the king of Syria, the prophet Elisha was consulted, and finally Naaman departed, healed of the leprosy. The whole account is replete with interesting detail: the impatience and disappointof Naaman in the first instance: his subsequent cure, and gratitude to the prophet and the God of the prophet; the depravity of Gehazi and the fearful punishment which followed, present a combination of events which teems, in every part, with grave and forcible instruction. But "the little maid" is not mentioned again. She had "done what she could," and she, "being dead, yet speaketh." It might seem a very small matter, yet the part she took in the business, the raising of her youthful voice was the cause, under God, of bringing back that weighty answer, "Wash and be clean."

Nine hundred years farther on in the world's history behold another scene, whence

may be learned the mind of God upon this subject from Christ Himself. "And who is my neighbour?" asked the lawyer, willing to justify himself, after having received an answer from our Lord to a former question which had been propounded in order to tempt Him. Jesus thought fit to clothe his reply in the garb of a narrative, saying, "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him he had compassion on him, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil

and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And on the morrow, when he departed, he took out twopence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him, and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again I will repay thee. Which now, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among thieves?"

The Master had related a story—and nothing more. He made no comment on the conduct or motives of the persons mentioned; He had merely drawn a picture which explained itself. But it was a picture Deity had designed for other eyes and hearts beside those of the captious lawyer.

The priest "passed by on the other side." He might have been pressed for time. He might have been exercising his devotions—or he might have thought that had he investigated the condition of the wounded man, and found that he was dead, suspicion would

possibly have fallen on himself as the perpetrator of the horrid deed. But whatever he thought, he certainly saw him, and left him; to die, or to decay. What a view of human nature! how awfully cold and callous must the heart of that man be who can avoid a helpless object of distress, when he knows that if he would, he could do something to assist, and that, moreover, when no other hand is near to render either help or deliverance.

The Levite went and "looked on him," so that he had the opportunity of ascertaining whether the man was alive or not; but he left him too, and walked away in the same path that the priest had already trodden. There is a great dread in some minds, of incurring trouble, inconvenience, or expense for anything but self. For self, absorbing self, nothing is too good to be sacrificed, whatever it is, wherever it comes from, or to whomsoever it belongs. "But a certain





Samaritan came where he was." saw him, and something more. His feelings were first aroused, "he had compassion on him," they were feelings allied to principle, for they led to right action. He tended the bleeding body, comforted the sinking spirit, and carried the mutilated sufferer to a place of safety and repose. It seems that, notwithstanding, he had business to transact, for next day he was obliged to consign his charge to the care of the innkeeper; whose attention to the sick man during his absence he wisely endeavoured to insure, before he ventured to leave the disabled victim alone to the mercy of strangers again. He had given his sympathy, his labour, his protection, and his time—and now he gave his money—for what, and for whom? for the necessities of one unknown, and merely thrown in his way by what is called accident. Our Lord thought it no extraordinary act of friendly kindness only to be heard of and

admired. He intended it as a copy for universal imitation, for when He had asked which of the three was neighbour to him who fell among thieves, He immediately subjoined, "Go and do thou likewise." What a blessed thing is the grace of God which maketh men to differ! How many there are, praised be His name! who daily show mercy, so far as they can, in the temper, spirit, and unselfish exertion of the "Good Samaritan" of old.





CHAPTER VII.

RULERS.

"He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God."

"THE powers that be are ordained of God;" how needful then that those who are delegated with authority should hold their power in submission to the will of Him who gave it! The history of society develops that, in order to continue in existence, the arm of government must be extended over it. No matter in what diversity of form, whether despotism, monarchy, or republicanism, but rulers of some sort are indispensable. The flight of time makes no alteration in the constitution of man in his present condition on earth; "there is no

new thing under the sun"-it is the same scene repeated again and again. He knows and feels that there must be government, for his well-being and protection. Commencing, then, from the lowest step, children must have governors, savages must have their chiefs and kings, soldiers their captains and generals, and nations their presidents or Every portion of the human sovereigns. race then finds in one way or other that the adoption of government is obligatory. Nowhere perhaps may men more reasonably look for evidence of friendship than in the devoted agency of their rulers. Moses, that meek yet mighty man, whom God set over the children of Israel to be their commander and deliverer, established his character as the friend of the people. It is true that in his office he was a type of Jesus Christ; but still, simply as appointed leader of the Israelites, he left indisputable proof that his best desires and affections were

bound up in their welfare and future happiness, as well as in the honour of Jehovah.

Throughout his whole career, during the tedious and trying wanderings in the wilderness, the ingratitude, perverseness, obstinacy and rebellion of the people never shook them from his heart. Notwithstanding their continual murmurs and unjust accusations against him, he ceased not to supplicate, and use every argumentative intreaty his wisdom suggested, that the judgments and destruction so frequently threatened by Almighty God might be averted. He too well knew and felt their wickedness, and hated the sins they committed, but nevertheless he was their friend, and remained so to the end of his days.

Josiah king of Judah (whose early piety proclaims him kindred in spirit with our youthful Edward of more modern days) has also shewn us what can be done for a people

when the hand of power is guided by a heart that fears the Lord. What national crime is like idolatry? especially where the smallest gleam of God's truth has pierced through the crevices of a legislature to enlighten the miserable gloom of superstitious heathenism — what can justify the fostering of an iniquity which is hateful in the sight of God, and brings down eternal ruin upon the souls and bodies of deluded men! Josiah thought it right to do away with offences disgraceful to a people professing to follow the true God, and which subjected them to just vengeance from the Most High, whose honour and commandment they had dared to despise. This king cared for the people, though they cared not for themselves; and his vigorous spirit knew no rest, till he had purified the land not only from idols, but all the conveniences intended for the practices of idolatry, as well as "the workers with familiar spirits and wizards" and every

other gross abomination by which "Judah and Jerusalem were defiled"-nor was his zeal consumed in one direction. He sought to raise up that which was good, while putting down that which was bad. He set himself to the work of repairing "the house of the Lord his God." And during these repairs, "a book of the law of the Lord was found given by Moses"-and when the book was carried to the king, and read before him," he rent his clothes"—and for what reason? because he trembled for himself and for his people and he "sent to enquire of the Lord." Although it was impossible that inspired declarations of the purposes of God could be reversed, yet the pious solicitude of Josiah for the people was appreciated by Him who "trieth the heart." The good king was spared from seeing the evil which was to be brought "upon that place and its inhabitants." Still further active for the best interests of his subjects. he revived and restored religious ordinances, for he commanded them saying, "keep the passover unto the Lord your God as it is written"—and he accompanied the command by affording them every facility for obeying it thoroughly. Josiah was undoubtedly the *friend* of his people, and might prove a useful object for the attention of Christian rulers.

Concern felt for the condition of the oppressed and degraded bespeaks the presence of a spirit delicate and nobly moulded. It was when tidings reached the godly Nehemiah of the wretched state of the Jews" which were escaped and left of the captivity," sunk in "great affliction and reproach," and that the wall of their Jerusalem was "broken down and the gates burned with fire," that he "sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven." During this period of humiliation, after

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NEHEMIAH AND ARTAXERKES, page 71.

confessing the sins of the children of Israel, and alluding to the threats and promises pronounced to them through Moses, the heart of Nehemiah seemed lifted up to God by faith, to ask the special favour of help in a project which filled his thoughts, as he said, "Prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man," for he was the king's cupbearer. Holding communion with God is the way to strengthen men's courage, and discover to them that supposed impossibilities are often proved to be practicable, when laid before the throne of the Lord God omnipotent. Nehemiah found it so; for "it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that wine was before him, and I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been beforetime sad in his presence." Nehemiah was no hypocrite; the anguish his countenance betrayed for the guilt and

desolation of the people was not affected. It first drew forth an enquiry from the king, which was immediately followed by the words, "this is nothing else but sorrow of heart." For a little time Nehemiah "was sore afraid," but soon plainly stated the disastrous situation of "the city," the place of his "fathers' sepulchres lying waste." The king told him to make his request. What a moment for Nehemiah!—The Lord then had granted him "mercy in the sight of this man;" and he, wisely, before replying to his earthly monarch, "prayed to the God of heaven." The king's permission to go, with power and materials to build, was given, and he speedily journeyed to Jerusalem. The disclosure of his intentions was well received by the heads of the people, but he was soon met by opposition in the persons of some who "laughed them to scorn, and despised them," and accused them of rebellion against the king.

But Nehemiah surmounted all difficulties, and persevered in the work till it was com-While it was in progress, a cry reached him, from some of the Jews against their brethren. He learned that usury and slavery, with its fraudulent varieties and attendant horrors, had been practised upon the weaker by the stronger—on the poorer by the richer. There is such a thing as righteous indignation. Nehemiah felt it, for he "was very angry when he heard their cry and these words," and assembling the oppressors he sharply rebuked them with all authority, "and they found nothing to answer;" then he solemnly added this timely, judicious remonstrance and advice-"It is not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God, because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies? likewise, and my brethren, and my servants, might exact of them money and corn: I

pray you leave off this usury. Restore, I pray you, to them, even this day their lands, their vineyards, their oliveyards, and their houses, also the hundreth part of the money and of the corn, the wine and the oil, that ye exact of them. Then they said, We will restore them, and will require nothing of them; so will we do as thou sayest. I called the priests, and took an oath of them, that they should do according to this promise. Also I shook my lap and said, So God shake out every man from his house, and from his labour, that performeth not this promise, even thus be he shaken out and emptied. And all the congregation said, Amen, and the people did according to this promise." "A word spoken in due season how good is it!"

When the wall was rebuilt, and Nehemiah employed in renewing sacred rites, rectifying abuses and seeking to restore things to their

former condition, he shewed an admirable trait in his character as governor, and it was this. In posts of authority he was particular to set men who would rule in the fear of the Lord, for we find him saying of one to whom he had given the charge of Jerusalem, "for he was a faithful man, and feared God above many;" and in another place, after naming some appointed treasurers, he continues, "for they were counted faithful, and their office was to distribute unto their brethren." Surely Nehemiah was a friend to his people; and a simpleminded man too, with all his wisdom, tact, industry, and perseverance. He did not feel that he had earned a title to reward, for, unlike the Pharisee, who congratulated himself on his own good doings, Nehemiah ventured twice to pray that "his God would remember him for good, for what he had done;" as if he almost conceived it possible

that his small imperfect services might be altogether overlooked. But no—the Divine Ruler is a just God, and hath declared, "Verily there is a reward for the righteous."



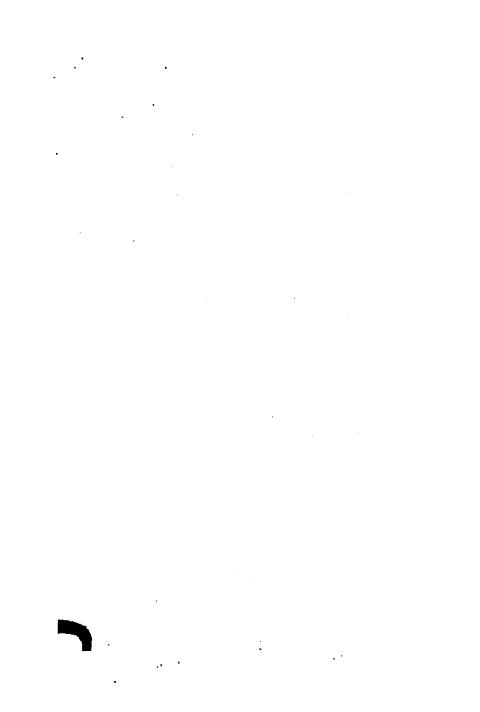
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Lord being sinless, by no means prevented His taking part in the common cares and concerns of social life. Nor did it indispose Him for condescending to indulge in such tender and amiable affections as sweeten life, and form some of the choicest links of that invisible chain which binds the best of men together in this rough changing world. We find that while He sojourned here, our Divine Master became attached to a small family residing at Bethany, consisting of three persons, Lazarus, Martha, and Mary, a brother, and his two sisters. It was on the occasion of a bereavement in this little circle, that our Lord selected an opportunity of exhibiting His power as God, by raising the dead to life. But it is desired at this time rather to trace his conduct as man throughout this touching scene, sympathy for suffering friends being the peculiar lesson to be derived from the incident. Lazarus was seized by sickness, and the

sisters who believed in Jesus, sent in their distress to acquaint Him of their trouble. which was described in a short, but comprehensive sentence, "he whom thou lovest is sick." Jesus immediately declared that it it was not a sickness unto death, alluding to the miracle He meant to work, and by which He was about to prove His divinity. He announced His intention of going to the mourning party, His disciples reminded Him of the danger He would incur by exposing Himself to those who had so lately sought to stone Him. This however was no obstacle to His setting out on an errand of mercy, and He proceeded to explain to them that He was going to restore Lazarus to life. It has been supposed, by some, that when He said, "our friend Lazarus sleepeth," He thus expressed Himself to avoid giving a shock to their feelings by at once informing them of his death. If it were so, He very soon after explicitly told them that Lazarus

was dead, and then declared His determination to go to him. As the Lord approached the scene of woe, Martha was the first to meet Him, her ready salutation being, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here my brother had not died, but I know that even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee." This was the language of faith from Martha, but yet she did not appear to have a very clear conception or anticipation of what was to follow. Meanwhile our Lord did not forget the disconsolate Mary. He enquired for her, as we learn from the words of her sister: "the Master is come, and calleth for thee." Then when Mary was come where Jesus was and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying unto Him, Lord, Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping that came with her, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled, and said, Where

MARTHA AND MARY, page 84.



have ye laid him? They said unto Him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept. said the Jews, Behold how He loved him!" Our Lord of course knew all the time that Lazarus would soon be released from the bands of death by the word of His mouth. The grief, therefore, He felt, and to which for a short period He gave way, (as any other tender-hearted man would have done under such circumstances,) was the pain resulting from pitiful sympathy. mourned. It was natural they should do so, and there was nothing in the heart or religion of Jesus which forbad their giving vent to the sorrow which oppressed them; a sorrow consequent upon the loss they had sustained, and which they scarcely knew how to bear. Jesus felt for them, and mingled His tears with theirs. Oh, this should never be forgotten when real distress comes across us in the providence of God, especially amongst friends. We do not read

of a single instance in Scripture of Jesus sympathising with mourners over imaginary troubles; with any who grieved about trifles magnified into undue importance by their own selfishness and disregard of the greater trials of their less favoured brethren. No: Jesus dealt only with realities and was always in earnest, both in speech and action. We observe that our Lord delayed His journey till some days after He had received the intelligence of the illness of Lazarus; and the reason is evident, Lazarus was to die that he might be raised again. might seem strange to the anxious sisters (it is written with reverence) that the Lord, in whose power they believed, and whose affection they did not doubt, should fail to come to them in the hour of their need. has been too common with all the children of God, more or less, sometimes to think it almost hard, when the Lord has not interposed for them at the exact moment which they conceived to be the proper time for their exemption from trial, and yet they have afterwards been frequently permitted to see, that the Lord not only came to their assistance, but did it "right early," notwithstanding their suspicious thoughts of His indifference or displeasure. But it must be noticed that the greeting both of Martha and Mary was the same: "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died;" implying, you might, had you come sooner, have prevented this calamity. Bethany was but two miles from Jerusalem, and "Jesus loved them." No feeling of resentment could rise in the bosom of Jesus, because He was without sin; yet, as a perfect and holy man, He must, it is imagined, have felt the injustice which supposed Him capable of neglecting His friends when they were unexpectedly placed in so painful a position. But the scene was about to change, and sorrow to be turned into joy. Jesus then coming to the grave saith, "Take ye away the stone." Martha, whose faith failed her at this juncture, assured Him that corruption had already commenced in the remains of the departed, as if to suggest that it was now therefore too late to disturb them. This unbelief drew forth the gentle reproof, "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe thou shouldest see the glory of God?" Then followed the command of Deity: Lazarus come forth!"

Jesus was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;" and from His entire knowledge of the miserable state of this fallen world through sin, His pity and sympathy must have been deeper and more exquisite than that of any other man. Nevertheless we know, from His constant labours for the cure and amelioration of pain and distress connected with the perishing bodies of men, that He had satisfaction in the relief and enjoyment of ease, which He conferred on

the afflicted, and which they were sure to receive wherever He came. As in the late season of lamentation His foreknowledge as God did not interfere with His sympathetic feelings as man, so now, His omnipotence as Jehovah would not hinder His entertaining complacency as man, in beholding the joy and consolation He was able to afford those friends whom He loved, and had restored to each other.

"His heart is made of tenderness."

Never were penned more truthful words than those, for His compassion is boundless, as His love is infinite. Shortly after this event, Jesus and Lazarus were guests at a supper given in Bethany at the house of Simon the Leper. Martha served, and Mary came, bearing the memorable box of costly perfumed ointment, with which she proceeded to anoint the person of our Lord. Her well-meant attention was favourably received by Jesus, who readily appreciated the desire

she felt to show Him honour. The murmur of the thief "who bore the bag" contrasted strangely with Mary's liberality, and induced the Lord to rebuke him by justifying her. And here we may pause for one moment to put a question to ourselves. Are we sufficiently on the alert to defend the character and justify the conduct of our Christian friends, when they are attacked in our hearing? Or, are those sacrifices, that some of the Lord's people make for His sake, by many cold or selfish hearts called "injudicious"—allowed to be so by us? Do we ever (Judas like) regret a strong effort or large outlay made for the service and honour of Jesus Christ? He did not think Mary's generosity and devotion any mistake; on the contrary, He publicly approved and commended her action, and further declared that the fame of it should be handed down to posterity, which has been verified to the present hour. Mary

too was a woman—the strong should support the weak, and "He who spake as never man spake," pronounced her not only blameless in the matter, but worthy of praise. one member suffer, all the members suffer This should be the invariable experience of Christians, and a blow aimed at one should be parried by any other with the righteous shield of brotherly defence. But where peculiar friendship has been professed, how much more may it be expected! How sad when any motive leads a Christian to slide away from upholding the character of a good man, because he cannot make it fit exactly with his own ideas of propriety or economy. "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment."



CHAPTER IX.

JESUS AND JOHN.

"There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."

In the gospel of St. John are preserved those facts which authorize the general belief of his being that apostle who was honoured with the especial regard and affection of the Saviour. This circumstance should be carefully regarded, containing as it does a striking evidence of the perfect human nature of our Lord Jesus Christ, because preference for, or selection of, an object of endearment proves a choice which must be identified with humanity. "God is a spirit." "A spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have." Our divines

tell us that a spirit has not passions. The love, therefore, which the Triune God has for the whole number of saved sinners who are reconciled to Himself through Jesus Christ, is altogether different from an inclination or leaning of heart towards one particular individual who, when selected, becomes a marked favourite, or one loved above others. It was as God that Jesus Christ gave John eternal life; it was in His human nature, He distinguished that disciple by conferring upon him the high honour of His peculiar friendship and affection.

John has been called "the bosom friend of Jesus." The short and simple records he has left of the intimate intercourse he had with the Lord, seem to indicate that such a term has not been misapplied. But we have no reason to suppose, from what we see in Scripture, that John was a better man than all the rest of the twelve. It may be supposed to have been the case,

but it cannot be proved. We may more easily infer that the preference arose from some indefinable cause, which often attracts one person to another among men, but for which, if disposed, they are unable to give any account. The most remarkable and impressive sign of the love of Jesus for His chosen friend was that publicly shewn by Him, in His dying hours, on the cross. John was standing near—near to the bleeding body of Him "who loved him," and was now about to die for his salvation. Mary, the mother of Jesus, stood by. torments of crucifixion and all the dreadful accompaniments of the Lord's suffering did not extinguish or obscure His natural individual sympathy for those whom He loved in the flesh. He knew that the Mother of His humanity would need support, solace, and protection; and as He looked at her, those imperishable words fell from His lips, "Woman, behold thy

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JOHN AND MARY, page 95."

son: then, turning to the disciple He said, "Behold thy mother." Oh, what tenderness was here! Could He have given stronger proof of His regard for John, than by committing to him the sacred trust of providing for the mother of the "one Mediator?" Could He have shewn in a more convincing manner the confidence He felt in his character for constancy and kindness? Unquestionably not. The concluding act of His earthly friendship seemed to outweigh all that had gone before. Can we conceive for a moment, the feelings with which the humble John received the solemn charge? What earthly dignity or distinction could be compared with it? and yet, if we were wise, even we might have some faint idea of his sensations, by recollecting when called on to support the Lord's poor, who it was that said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

For a Christian who believes himself saved by grace alone through Jesus Christ, it is a disinterested way of proving love for that Saviour, by ministering to the comfort and necessities of the needy. The diligent Dorcas was a lively illustration of this truth. We have abundant Scripture warrant for knowing that those who care for the poor (and especially those of the household of faith) are favoured of God. "He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed, for he giveth of his bread to the poor." But the "bountiful eye" and "liberal soul" are not to be restricted to the wealthy. Jesus was a poor man, and His disciples were poor also, yet we find it was their custom to give something out of "the bag" for "the poor."

One more reflection arising from the subject of this chapter must not be omitted, suggesting, as it does, a powerful delineation from a perfect model of the friendship of a

Where, amongst all son for his mother. human ties, might friendship more naturally be looked for than in such a relationship as Jesus Himself taught it by precept and example; and young men, whenever tempted to neglect, despise, or desert their mothers, would do well to think of Him hanging on the cross in the agonies of death, yet remembering, honouring, and providing for His distressed and indigent mother. Ah! think of it, such sons, when the form which supported you in infancy and protected you in youth, bends under a weight of care, sickness, poverty, or age,—then think of Jesus, and let the filial tenderness of an expiring Saviour write on your hearts with indelible distinctness, " The friendship of a son for his mother."



CHAPTER X.

CONCLUDING CHAPTER.

"Let him reprove me."

In treating on *Friendship* throughout this volume, care has been taken strictly to adhere to the meaning of that word, in its best and highest sense. Carnal intimacies, contracted for base or equivocal purposes, cannot properly be dignified with the cherished appellation of *friendship*; nor can the fickle attachments of a less criminal kind, which are ever floating on the surface of society, rightly lay claim to a title which describes, and is inseparably united with, all that is constant, faithful, and kind. Consequently, no selections have been made from

Scripture, of false friends, or affected friendships. He that is at enmity with God must lack the elements of friendship for man; and any spurious profession of the sort will never stand a text which inevitably leads to the exposure of its hollow and perishing pretensions. But there is one ingredient in the construction of friendship, which has only as yet been slightly touched on, and must not be allowed to escape attention. It is valuable and effective when used in a righteous spirit, and generally productive of beneficial and lasting results. Rebuke is the thing signified. "Rebuke a wise man and he will love thee;" but it must be a wise man. There is something in nature that recoils from rebuke. Self-love, self-esteem, and self-conceit are sadly lacerated by so wholesome an application—notwithstanding sometimes it is requisite, and in the end proves safe. The impetuosity of passion, density of ignorance, and restless spirit of immortality which all struggle together in saint as well as sinner, cause occasional deviations and mistakes, that call aloud for the word of warning and admonition. And whence can it come better than from those who love us, who pain themselves for our profit, while discharging the delicate and difficult duty of reproof?

It was the rash zeal of Joshua which prompted him, on hearing that Eldad and Medad prophesied in the camp, to cry out, "My lord Moses forbid them." He was perhaps surprised at the answer given, and unconscious of the bad feeling which lurked within him, though to the lawgiver it was sufficiently apparent. And Moses said unto him, "Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put His spirit upon them." Most likely Joshua never forgot that rebuke—a rebuke which analyzed his real motives on the spot and at

the moment, and also implied the disposition of mind with which the gifts of God should be desired and regarded.

It is not easy for a Christian to disentangle the precious from the vile in the workings of his own heart; nor to distinguish, during sudden excitement, whether his spontaneous words and actions are more the products of the old man or the new. But when such is the case, rebuke not uncommonly proves very successful in solving obscurities, and revealing with surprising quickness the latent evils which are confined beneath a fair and specious covering. It was so on one occasion, when the disciples John and James, incensed against the inhabitants of a village of the Samaritans because they would not receive Jesus, said unto Him, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, even "But Jesus turned and as Elias did?" rebuked them, and said, ye know not what

manner of spirit ye are of, for the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives but to save them."

Again, at another time, as He was describing to His disciples the sufferings and death He was about to endure, Peter, venturing on the presumptuous language, "Be it far from Thee, Lord; this shall not happen unto Thee," received a seasonable rebuke in the severe reply, "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." Doubtless this was amongst the "all things" that worked together for the apostle's good; and it may be remarked in passing, that the rebuke of. a saint is not only individually useful to the person or persons addressed, but often becomes the parent of improvement, by diffusing some general good for the advantage and enjoyment of the oppressed. On the invasion and burning of Ziklag by the

Amalekites, when "David was greatly distressed," the Lord was pleased to comfort him by a promise of victory, and recovery of the property, which the enemy had carried away. David therefore pursued them as he was commanded, with six hundred men; but two hundred of these being too faint to proceed, he left them behind at the brook Besor. After he had vanquished his foes and was returning with their spoil, the two hundred went forth to meet the triumphant troop; and David, with characteristic kindness, drew near and saluted them. some of the others ignobly proposed that no part of the booty should be given to the two hundred, and that they should be sent away destitute with their wives and their children. David's sense of equity however was shocked at the idea of such mean and unjust conduct, and he said, "Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the Lord hath given us, who hath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hand, for who will hearken unto you in this matter? But as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike. And it was so from that day forward, that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel unto this day."

Likewise in the days of Elisha, when the king of Syria warred against Israel and sent "horses and chariots and a great host to encompass the city" and take the Prophet, leading the people (God having smitten them with blindness in compliance with his request) by a way they knew not, brought them into the midst of Samaria. Then it was that the king of Israel seeing them, asked, "My father, shall I smite them? shall I smite them? observe the answer of the Prophet. "Thou shalt not smite them: wouldst thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy

bow? Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master; and he prepared great provision for them: and when they had eaten and drank he sent them away, and they went to their master: so the bands of Syria came no more unto the land of Israel.

There is yet one other peculiar case, in which even the nearest and dearest must learn to bear reproof, and the reprover beware, when called to the task by passing events, that he neither swerve nor shrink from discharging a duty which, however disagreeable, is imperative. With Christians God must be first, everything else second. If then, on some occasion, His honour be in any way publicly injured by those we love, no earthly consideration should prevent His servants from openly vindicating the right, at the expense and exposure of the wrong. It is immaterial who the offender may chance to be; a jealous care for the honour and

cause of God must precede all sensitive regret for the infliction of punishment, which by defection the transgressor has deserved. At the restoration of the ark, the buoyant heart of David overflowed with joy, and in rendering homage and thanksgiving to God, "he danced before the Lord with all his might." It was a religious ceremony with him. His wife Michal. looking at him through a window, despised him for it in her heart. When he had offered up sacrifice and burnt-offerings, and feasted the people, he returned to bless his household; and Michal, on meeting him, exclaimed, "How glorious was the king of Israel to-day, who uncovered himself in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!" And David said unto Michal, "It was before the Lord, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord, over Israel; therefore will I play before the Lord, and I will yet be more vile than this, and will be base in mine own sight: and of the maidservants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honour." Even the endeared wife when so erring must be subject to censure, nor be at all spared because of her close affinity.

"Faithful are the wounds of a friend." This was the experience of Job under the correcting reproof of the pious Elihu, and such will it ever be with the Christian brotherhood, till "that happy era" begins when reproof will be no longer needed.

A later example, found in the New Testament, may serve as a rule for action on those undesirable occasions when this species of rebuke is indispensable. "Open rebuke is better than secret love." The honour of God, and the spiritual health of man, are more to be considered than giving temporary pain to human feelings; of which, reluctant

as affection is to be the cause, the moral character of love will ultimately prove a much greater kindness than the avoidance of such duty because it is distasteful. that rebuketh a man shall afterwards find more favour than he that flattereth with his tongue." St. Paul, in writing to the Galatians, records the scene just alluded to. "But when Peter was come to Antioch I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles; but when they were come he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him, insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the Gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews,

why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? We, who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ that we might be justified by the faith of Christ and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we also ourselves are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid."

In drawing to a close, a few more words are offered to the reader, in hope that the perusal of the preceding pages may not have proved wearisome. Constructed as we are, it is impossible but that friendship in itself should be to us an interesting subject. Gloomy ascetics and visionary fanatics have vainly urged their dogma, that the Supreme Being should alone be loved by man; and every earthly creature spurned

from his heart as an enemy to holiness and But the Bible says nothing of this Bible religion is not intended for kind. such as men may wish they were, or think it possible they might become; it is for the use of men as they really are—suited to their present condition with all its contingencies, and propounded by the Divine Author with an accurate knowledge of their entire case as it is. Love they must; they cannot help it; and the Bible nowhere denies the fact; it simply teaches on that head, how the affections are to be guided, and when restrained. Full provision has been made by a compassionate God for the indulgence of all the most tender feelings springing up in the human bosom. Nothing but sin is forbidden; and because men are incapable of harmlessly enjoying anything when left to themselves, they are told to lean on the arm of Omnipotence, by going to the strong for strength; and then, in company of the "Beloved," they are permitted to know that it is possible "to walk in the spirit" through all the relationships of humanity upon earth.

But there are moments, known to most, when an experience of the mutability or insufficiency of human friendship strikes harshly on the sensibilities of man, then, hurt and disgusted, he is ready to murmur with Job, "Miserable comforters are ye Yet how idle is it for men, when undergoing this trial, to fly hither and thither for comfort, support, or They should go to Jesus. He is the friend who can smooth their passage through this world, as well as insure an entrance into that which is to come. When He is sought, He soothes the spirit, calms the trembling frame, and alters the ill-conceived, erroneous view we sometimes take of the intentions of friends, who perhaps have offended, slighted, or even injured us. He points to their infirmities, and reminds us that the strong should bear with the weak; that the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle—must be meek and lowly, like Himself, not easily provoked, bearing all things, enduring all things; and thus He restoreth the soul to so incomparable a state of quiescence, that discord, then banished from the breast, leaves the relenting heart to throb again with generous love for those whom but now it was inclined to discard for ever. Forgiveness, be it remembered, forms a part of friendship; and he "that hath friends must shew himself friendly."



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